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LETTERS

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JUL 9 1909

WHAT IS A CALL
TO THE MINISTRY?

IN LETTERS

TO

ONE INQUIRING ON THE SUBJECT.

BY REV. JAMES D. KNOWLES.

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WASKELL

DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME BY ENERGY AND PERSEVERANCE

LORD CHANCELLOR KING, of England, was a grocer at that period of life which is commonly spent in academical study by those destined for the profession of law. Chief Justice Pratt, of New York, having been brought up a carpenter, was led, by a severe cut from an axe, which unfitted him for work, to turn his attention to the law. Franklin, who seemed equally to excel in the conduct of the business of life, in the sublimest studies of philosophy, and in the management of the most difficult state affairs, was bred a printer. Claude, the unrivalled landscape painter, was a dull youth. Robert, of Sicily, though distinguished for learning and genius, was so torpid when a boy, that he was with difficulty taught the rudiments of grammar. Dryden gave no public testimony of his talents before he was twenty-seven. Cowper did not become an author till he was fifty. Saunderson, an illustrious mathematician, and a successor of Sir Isaac Newton, when only two years old was deprived by small-pox, not only of his sight, but of his eyes themselves, which were destroyed by abscess; yet he obtained an accurate knowledge of several languages, and published a Commentary on Sir Isaac Newton's Principia. The celebrated German metaphysical philosopher, Kant, was the son of a harness-maker, who lived in the suburbs of his native city, Königsberg. Chief Justice Logan, of Pennsylvania, was apprenticed to a linen-draper. He afterwards acquired a knowledge of six languages. Samuel Lee, Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge, England, was seventeen years of age before he conceived the idea of learning a foreign language. Out of the scanty pittance of his weekly earnings as a carpenter, he purchased at a book-stall a volume, which, when read, was exchanged for another.

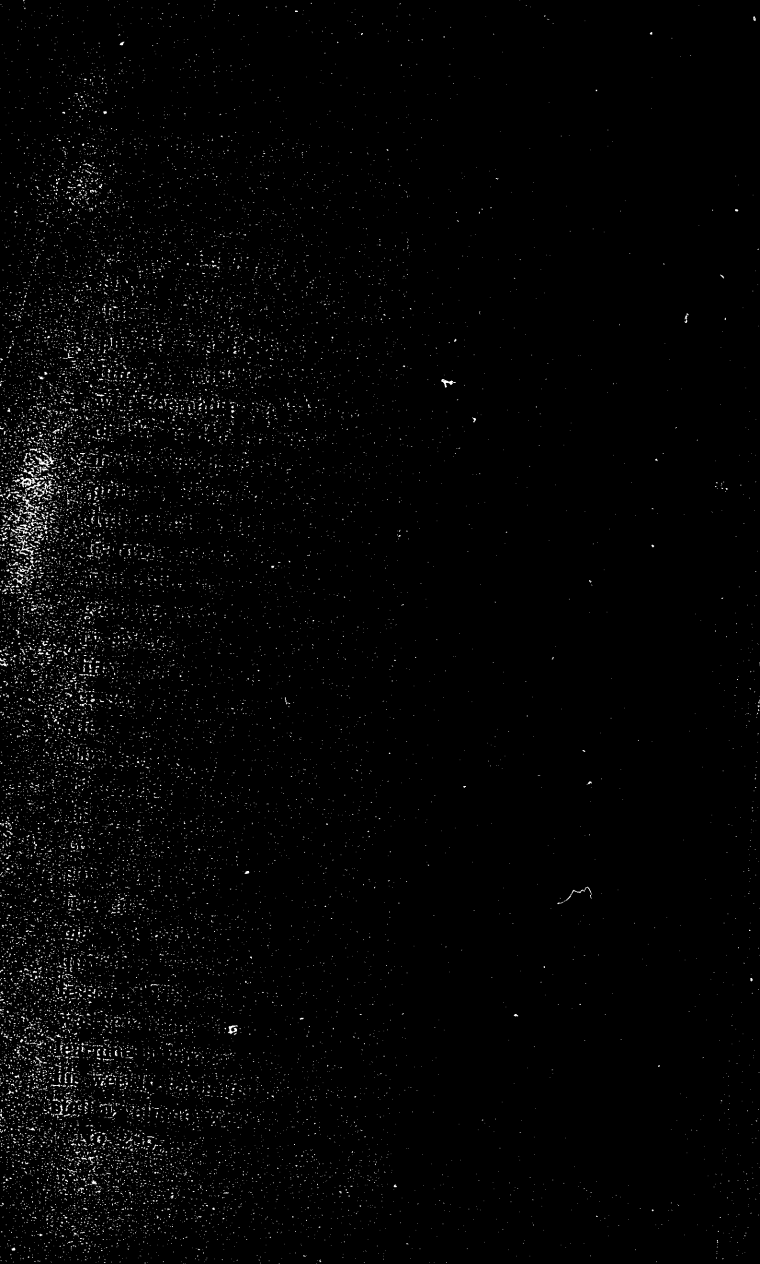
WHAT IS A CALL TO THE MINISTRY?

BY REV. JAMES D. KNOWLES.

LETTER I.

My dear Brethren—I need not assure you that the subject on which we recently conversed is deeply interesting to my mind. The inquiry, *Is it my duty to preach the Gospel?* is one of the most important that can occupy your attention. I have wished that some person competent to the task would furnish the church with a judicious treatise on this topic. It would be most gratefully received by hundreds of young men, whose minds are agitated by doubts concerning their duty. Such a treatise, too, would be a valuable assistant to pastors, both by reminding them of their duty to the young men in their respective churches, and by aiding them to perform that duty. The churches also need instruction respecting their obligations to seek out and cherish the gifts which may exist among their young members. But as such an essay has not yet appeared, you will allow me to suggest a few thoughts on the subject.

It gives me pleasure to know that you agree with me on the point, that *strict love to the Saviour* is the first and indispensable qualification. If I had doubt whether you have been “born of the Spirit,” I could not think of you in reference to the ministry, but should rather feel it my first duty to beseech you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God. A man who has not scriptural evidence that his



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No. 285.

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It gives me pleasure to know that you agree with me on the point, that *sincere love to the Saviour* is the first and indispensable qualification. If I had doubt whether you have been “born of the Spirit,” I could not think of you in reference to the ministry, but should rather feel it my first duty to beseech you, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God. A man who has not scriptural evidence that his

heart has been renewed, may be *sure* that it would be presumption to intrude himself into the ministry. No monarch would employ a rebel as an ambassador. Much less will the Saviour appoint an impenitent sinner to proclaim his Gospel. To such a man the words of the psalmist may be most emphatically applied: "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee."

But, while I believe you to be a true Christian, I must exhort you, before you proceed further in your inquiries concerning the ministry, to "make your calling and election *sure*" by a faithful application to your own soul of the scriptural tests of conversion. That it is possible to arrive at a well-grounded persuasion of our adoption—that we may "know that we have passed from death unto life"—that we may enjoy the "full assurance of faith"—is indisputable. Every Christian perhaps experiences occasional eclipses of his hope, because he is betrayed into sin, which darkens his understanding and disturbs his peace. But this is a different thing from that perpetual overshadowing of the soul of which some professing Christians complain. They have some light, but the rays struggle through a cloud. They enjoy some hope, but it is faint and wavering. They have a little peace, but it is often disturbed by fears. Such a doubting believer is not qualified to plead the Saviour's cause with men. He cannot confidently urge others to believe, while he himself has only a feeble faith. He cannot speak persuasively of the excellence of that religion, the consolations of which he does not himself enjoy. He cannot comfort the mourner, guide the inquirer, and remove the doubts of the perplexed. The young man, then, who is inquiring concerning the ministry, must examine himself, not merely to be satisfied that he is a Chris-

tian, but to ascertain whether his faith is sufficiently firm to enable him to go onward in the toils and conflicts of the ministry with the confidence of Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Another fundamental point which you fully admit is, that there must be a *call* to the ministry. You believe that it belongs to the Saviour alone to give pastors and teachers to his church, and to commission ambassadors to his enemies. You do not believe that every pious man, nor even every pious and well-educated man, has a right to become a minister. You believe that he whom God designs for the ministry will have a special intimation of the will of God, without which he must not presume to enter the sacred office. I will proceed, then, in my next to examine the nature of a call to the ministry. May the Lord preserve us from error, and guide us into all truth.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR BROTHER—While you fully believe that there is a special call to the ministry, you do not admit the idea of a *miraculous* intimation of the will of God. You do not expect to be addressed by an audible voice. You look for no visions. You wait for no supernatural light from heaven to flash suddenly upon you. Of all these you find instances in the Scriptures: but you do not believe that God now communicates, by such methods, his commands to men. A knowledge of his will, therefore, in all cases where there is not an express revelation of that will in the Scriptures, must be gathered from the general principles there laid down,

from the providence of God, and from the movings of his Spirit on the soul.

Let us then inquire what light on this subject may be derived from the general principles of the Bible.

One of these principles is, that we *are not our own, but are bought with a price*. The Saviour has redeemed us by his precious blood, and we are his by every claim which can spring from his relation to us as our Creator and our Redeemer. All Christians are bound by every tie of love, of gratitude, of regard to their own happiness, and of desire for the glory of their Lord, "to live, not unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Christians are in the highest sense the "peculiar people"—that is, the property of the Saviour, whom he has an entire right to place where he pleases, to employ in whatever service he may choose, and to subject to whatever trials and labors may be best adapted to promote his own glory and the prosperity of his kingdom. No Christian, therefore, is at liberty to consult his own taste or inclination alone, nor to seek exclusively his own advantage. Every Christian ought to inquire with a humble, grateful spirit of self-consecration to the Saviour's cause, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is, in a certain sense, a call to every service in which a Christian can be engaged, and he ought not to take any important step without seeking by prayer, by observing the providences of God, and by listening to the intimations of the Spirit, to know what is the divine will. A call to the ministry, I conceive, differs from a call to occupy any other post in the service of the Saviour, not so much in its nature as in its importance. The office of the ministry is more important, and therefore requires higher qualifications; but the minister's duty to *live for the Saviour* is no stronger, and indeed no other than the obligation which embraces every Christian.

From this principle then, my dear brother, we deduce this rule, that *an entire willingness to serve the Saviour in the ministry, or in any other post, is one necessary qualification of a minister.* This willingness, I am happy to believe, you sincerely cherish. Ever pray that it may continue to influence all your conduct. It will be a source of peace to whatever sphere of duty the Saviour may direct you.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR BROTHER—Another general principle which the Scriptures teach is, that it is the duty of every Christian to contribute *all in his power to the promotion of truth and holiness.* Nothing less than the utmost exertion of all his faculties can fulfil his duty. It becomes, then, a question which every Christian ought seriously and prayerfully to examine, *How can I be most useful?* As God has given to men different degrees of ability, he has evidently designed them for different stations. The parable of the talents is founded on this principle, and it teaches us the consolatory truth, that the faithful servant will be approved and rewarded by his master, whether he possess ten talents or but one. The reasoning of the apostle Paul, in the 12th chapter of Romans, proceeds on the fact, that there are different offices to be filled, and that different qualifications are given to those who are designed to occupy them: “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the

proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." We may, then, safely adopt this general rule, that wherever God has given to an individual the qualifications for a particular work, he ought to engage in that work. There would otherwise seem to be a waste of power. In the human body, each organ is evidently intended for its appropriate service. There is nothing deficient, and nothing superfluous. In the body of Christ the case is similar. God has undoubtedly distributed among her members all needful gifts for her preservation and growth. It is to be lamented that these gifts are not always judiciously and faithfully employed.

The principle now under consideration supplies us with two important rules, which may assist a young man to ascertain his duty respecting the ministry.

1. *That he ought himself to be convinced, on reasonable grounds, that he would be more useful as a minister than in any other sphere of duty.*

2. *That he ought to possess, in the opinion of others who are competent to judge, the essential qualifications for the ministry.*

The judicious Andrew Fuller has accordingly stated, in his brief remarks on a "Call to the Ministry," that it is a principle which may be taken for granted, that "whoever possesses the essential qualifications for the Christian ministry, is called to exercise them." I will, in my next letter, consider what light may be reflected on the path of duty from the *providence* of God.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR BROTHER—I mean to use the phrase *providence of God*, as including whatever God has done for a man, in respect to his endowments of body and of mind, the situation in which he is placed, and his duties and relations to his fellow-men.

That the physical constitution has some bearing on the question of duty respecting the ministry, is evident. A dumb man could not be a minister, whatever might be his mental and spiritual qualifications. A man whose health was greatly impaired, or whose constitution was so feeble as to preclude the hope of efficiency, ought not to enter on the work. In all such cases, the providence of God has decided the question.

The constitution of the mind has a still more direct connection with the subject. A man must have such a degree of understanding as to enable him to learn and to teach, or he cannot be fit for a minister. This degree we cannot fix in theory, though there will be little difficulty, perhaps, in deciding the point in practice. A feeble mind, which cannot manage ordinary affairs with success; a dull mind, which cannot learn; an eccentric mind, which prompts a man to say and do imprudent things; an indolent mind, which will not study; a very irascible temper, and other bad qualities of this kind, ought to be regarded as evidence that God does not intend the individual for the ministry. The qualifications specified in 1 Tim. 3: 1-7, and Titus 1: 5-9, should be carefully considered.

I say nothing here of an ignorant mind, because such a mind may be instructed, if it possess the ability and disposition. And here, my brother, allow me to make a suggestion, which is, I conceive, very important. The question,

Am I called to be a minister? does not include the question, *Is it my duty NOW to preach?* Much of the error which exists on this subject among the churches, and much of the embarrassment which often distresses the minds of young Christians, spring from confounding these questions. The inquiry, in most cases, ought to be, *Is it my duty to PREPARE to preach the Gospel?* It may be a man's duty to be acquiring the qualifications for the ministry, who is not yet fit to preach. This is too plain, it would seem, to need proof. Yet it may be profitable to illustrate this point. Paul informs us that he was separated and designed for the ministry from his birth. Gal. 1 : 15. The same fact is asserted by Jehovah himself concerning Jeremiah. Jer. 1 : 5. And all who believe in the foreknowledge of God, must believe that this is true of all the ministers whom he appoints. Some eminent ministers, like Dr. Doddridge, became pious in childhood. If Dr. Doddridge, while a child, had been informed by Jehovah that he was designed for the ministry, would it have been his duty then to commence preaching? Certainly not. It would have been his duty to devote himself to an earnest *preparation* for the work. If, then, a case might happen, in which the individual would be called, not to preach, but to *prepare* to preach, why should we suppose it unreasonable to conclude that God often does, by his providence and his Spirit, call men to the ministry, to be exercised not now, but when they shall have acquired the necessary preparation? Our Saviour called his apostles, not to preach immediately, but to be disciples, that is, *learners*, and when they were instructed, he sent them forth to proclaim his Gospel.

If this reasoning is correct, the difficulty which seriously embarrasses many young men, the want of sufficient education, is removed. It is a plain case, that God does not call a man to preach immediately, who is incapable of teaching.

It would be an impeachment of his wisdom to suppose it. But he may call a man to *prepare* to preach. If a young man, then, has the other qualifications, his want of education is not a reason for doubting whether he is called to be a minister; that is, to be a minister when he shall have made all suitable preparation. And at this time, when Education Societies are ready to assist every suitable applicant, and when seminaries of learning are so numerous, almost every young man may, if he will, obtain a competent education.

This view of the case, too, shows how unfounded is the objection, which is often made by Christians, to a course of education for the ministry. If, say they, a man is called to preach, he ought to preach, and not to spend his time at college, or at the theological seminary. But they mistake the point. If the call is to *prepare* to preach, the young man would disobey God if he should preach instead of pursuing his studies. Let, then, Christians beware how they censure young men, and entice them from their books. They undoubtedly often resist the will of God by such an interference, and destroy the usefulness of the unhappy man whom they have persuaded to misinterpret his call, and enter the field before he was prepared. This course of reasoning, too, shows that it is an injurious and wrong practice, to give a young man a *license* to *preach* before he is prepared. The practice of the churches on this subject ought to be conformed to the indications of God's will. If the call is to *prepare* to preach, the church ought to give a young man, of whose other qualifications they are satisfied, an expression of their approbation of such a course of preparation, reserving the *license* for that period when he shall have acquired a sufficient amount of knowledge and experience to enable him to teach.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR BROTHER—We may reasonably suppose that if God designs a young man for the ministry, his providence will furnish some *intimation of his will* besides the proper endowments of body and mind. The individual may expect to see, in his situation, in his pursuits, in his connection with others, a variety of circumstances concurring to point out his duty. The hand of God will be presented to guide his steps. There will be, especially, a removal of obstacles. These may spring from the opposition of parents or employers, in the case of a minor; from various engagements which cannot be violated without sin, and a release from which cannot be obtained; from pecuniary obligations; from domestic ties; and from a great variety of other causes. A man may be sure that while any lawful engagement which he cannot honorably disregard, opposes his entrance into the ministry, he must not proceed. He may use all proper means to obtain a release, but if this is impossible, he must submit. The minister must have a spotless reputation, for the scandal of violated engagements would destroy his usefulness. He must wait patiently, and if the difficulty is never removed, he must forego the privilege of preaching the Gospel. But a removal of the obstacle, especially if it takes place in such a way as to make the interference of God manifest, may be an encouraging indication of his will in reference to the ministry.

There are circumstances, too, in which a young man is sometimes placed, which impel him towards the ministry without any volition, or indeed consciousness of the fact, on his part. In the Sabbath-school he may be required, by a sense of duty, to take a prominent place. In conference and prayer-meetings the absence or supineness of others

may force him to become the leader. In some cases, where a church is destitute of a pastor, a young man may be urged by his brethren to read, and pray, and address the assembly, till he finds himself considered by others as a minister, and his own heart is too much interested to allow him to retrace his steps. This was almost literally the case with Andrew Fuller. Such providential events are among the strongest external evidences of a call to the ministry.

But the general opinion of Christians, among whom a young man is placed, that he is designed for the ministry, may be considered as the most satisfactory proof which can be furnished by God's providence. Respecting many of the necessary qualifications a man is not himself a sufficient judge. Of his talents, his piety, his prudence, his zeal for the glory of God, his aptness to teach, and his power to interest and benefit others, his brethren are better able to judge than himself. If, then, Christians around him come gradually to think that he is designed for the ministry, while he himself makes no disclosure of his feelings on the subject; or if, when he mentions it, he finds their minds prepared to approve and to encourage him, he may consider this concurrent opinion of Christians as a strong indication of the will of God. He ought not, it is true, to decide without that internal conviction of duty, of which I shall soon speak; but the favorable judgment of Christians ought greatly to strengthen that conviction. On the other hand, it may be established as a general rule, that a person ought to suspect the ground of such a conviction, if judicious and pious men around do not perceive in him ministerial gifts, and cannot bid him God speed. There are, without doubt, cases, in which the ignorance or prejudices of Christians may induce them to refuse their countenance and aid to a young man, and he may be forced to act from his own sense of duty. He would need, however, unusual-

ly strong evidences of his call, to authorize him to proceed in opposition to the opinion of his brethren.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR BROTHER—I now approach, with some solicitude, the most important and difficult part of this subject. The *internal call, by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the heart*, is, we fully believe, indispensable. But the mode of that operation cannot be described, for the same reason that we cannot define the mode in which the Spirit accomplishes the call of a sinner from darkness to light. In both cases, we can do no more than describe some of the effects.

I have spoken, in Letter II., of the entire willingness which a man must feel to serve the Saviour in the ministry, or in any other sphere of duty. This willingness is a fruit of the Spirit. There must be, besides this, a decided *desire* to be thus employed. Such a desire is referred to by Paul. “This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” There is not necessarily any immodesty, any ambitious aspiration in the desire to be a minister; but it is taken for granted, as Mr. Fuller remarks, that “this desire shall spring from a pure motive, and not from the love of ease, affluence, or applause. It is necessary, in my judgment,” he continues, “that there should be a *special desire* of this sort, a kind of fire kindled in the bosom, that it would be painful to extinguish.”

This desire will not be that transient impulse of zeal which usually impels young Christians to be active in religious duties, and to think that it would be a privilege to preach the Gospel, because they could thus be more useful. This feeling generally subsides into a calm principle

of benevolent activity in the particular sphere in which God may have placed the individual. But if a man is designed for the ministry this desire will increase. The value of the soul, the ruin and danger of impenitent sinners, and the rapid approach of eternity, will press themselves with great solemnity on his mind. He will feel an irrepressible desire to warn sinners of their danger, and to beseech them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. He will thus warn and beseech them, when he has an opportunity, either in private or in the Sabbath-school, or in the prayer-meeting. He will desire to be wholly occupied in thus persuading men to be reconciled to God; and the ministry, though he feels it to be awfully responsible and arduous, will appear to him desirable, because it would enable him to extend more widely his endeavors to turn his fellow-men from darkness to light, and to prepare them for the judgment-day.

But besides this earnest and unceasing desire to be employed in the ministerial office, there will be a conviction of duty to be thus engaged. The individual will feel so strong an impulse of soul towards this point, so entire a concentration of his thoughts and affections, that he cannot with a quiet mind think of pursuing any other employment. The condition of impenitent sinners, the urgent need of pastors for the destitute churches at home, and of missionaries to preach the Gospel to those who sit in darkness, will occupy his thoughts, will be the theme of his conversation, and will sometimes so excite his feelings that he cannot rest. He looks around on the ordinary pursuits of men, and feels that they are all comparatively trifling. He cannot endure the thought of spending his life in such pursuits. He is willing to renounce all worldly prospects for the sake of his Saviour and of his fellow-men. Though he is willing to do what his Lord may direct, yet he cannot think with satisfaction

of any other course of life than that which shall allow him the privilege of preaching the Gospel. He is fully aware that the ministry is arduous and responsible; and that human wisdom and strength are not "sufficient for these things." But he is not dismayed. He is willing to encounter the toil, and the self-denial; and his trust is in the Saviour, that his grace will be sufficient for him.

And all these feelings will be the strongest at those hours when his mind is most spiritual; when he enjoys the most communion with God; when the Saviour is the most precious to his soul, and when eternity rises to his view with the most distinctness, solemnity, and grandeur. It is in his closet, alone before God, that he feels most deeply the duty of devoting his life to the sacred work; and it is then that he can, with the utmost simplicity and godly sincerity, offer himself to his Redeemer, to be his servant, saying, "Here, Lord, am I, send me. Employ me as thou mayest please. Send me whither thou shalt choose, even if it be to the ends of the earth. Appoint for me prosperity or suffering, as thou mayest judge to be best; but allow me the privilege of preaching thy Gospel to perishing men. Make me the instrument of saving them from sin and from wrath; and grant me thy presence, in life and in death, and I ask no more."

These, my brother, are some of the feelings which the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of that man whom he designs for the ministry. They may not be experienced in an equal degree by all who are called to preach the Gospel; but he who has never felt such emotions ought to doubt whether it is his duty to be a minister.

He, on the contrary, who does feel them, and who at the same time is conscious that from pure motives he desires to be engaged in the ministry, may be satisfied that the Holy Spirit is moving him to the work; and if the prov-

idence of God seems to point in the same direction ; if obstacles are removed from his path ; if circumstances concur to promote his wishes ; if there is nothing adverse in his mental or physical constitution ; and especially, if judicious and pious friends concur in the opinion that he possesses suitable gifts for the ministry, he ought not to hesitate. His call is clear. It has the distinct signature of the divine hand. Let him at once surrender himself to the Saviour's service, and prosecute with all diligence the necessary preparation for the great and arduous, but most glorious office of preaching Christ crucified as "the way, the truth, and the life." He will need great mental as well as spiritual resources, and he must employ all the means in his power to cultivate his mind and to grow in grace. If circumstances allow him to obtain a thorough education, he would be guilty if he neglected them. If he cannot prosecute an extensive course of study, let him do what he can, and his Master will aid, approve, and reward him.

Affectionately yours.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR BROTHER—I have endeavored, in the preceding letters, to lay before you all the considerations which seem to me necessary to enable you to decide the question of duty respecting the ministry. You alone can judge respecting the application to yourself of several of the rules which I have mentioned. Allow me to present them again to your mind in the form of questions ; and may He who judges the heart enable you to examine faithfully your feelings and motives.

Are you satisfied that you have been born again ; and can you, like Peter, say, "Lord, thou knowest all things,

thou knowest that I love thee?" Do you habitually regard yourself as not your own, but as under sacred obligations to live, not unto yourself, but unto Him who died for you and rose again? And do you feel an entire willingness to serve him, either in the ministry, or in the humblest station which he may please to appoint for you? Do you constantly feel it to be your duty to be as useful as possible; and do you seize every opportunity of usefulness which is presented to you by the providence of God? Are you active in the Sabbath-school, punctual at the conference and prayer-meeting, and always ready to admonish and plead with the impenitent? Does a strong love for the Saviour's cause, and for the souls of men, warm your heart; and do you desire to be a minister of the Gospel, that you may be entirely devoted to the work of spreading the knowledge of Christ and him crucified? Are you conscious that this desire springs from pure motives, from sincere love to the Saviour and compassion to perishing men, and not from ambition, nor from a wish for ease and emolument?

Are you solemnly impressed with a sense of duty to preach the Gospel? Do you find your thoughts and feelings strongly directed towards the ministry, as the sphere in which, as you believe, you may be the most useful and the most happy? Does every other employment seem to you uninviting and irksome, not from indolence, but because you feel that your life may be spent more profitably in pleading the Saviour's cause with men? Do you feel that it would render you unhappy, and make life a melancholy scene, if you should be denied the privilege of preaching the Gospel? And in your most devotional hours, when souls appear the most valuable, and the Gospel the most important and glorious, and your spirit draws the nearest to God, does the ministry then appear the most inviting, your duty the most plain, and your motives satisfactory to

your own mind ? And, finally, does the providence of God seem to indicate his will ? Are you free from every engagement which might prevent your entrance on the ministry, and do the difficulties in the way disappear ?

If you can, my dear brother, in the fear of God, answer these questions in the affirmative, you may confidently believe that you are called to the ministry, so far as that call can be inferred from your own feelings and observation. There are other points, relating to your physical and mental constitution, your moral character, and your general habits, of which your brethren must judge. You ought to consult them, and if they are satisfied that you possess gifts which, with proper cultivation, will make you a useful minister, you have all the evidence which you can have, without a revelation from heaven, that it is your duty to preach the Gospel. I believe, my brother, you do possess the internal and the outward testimonials of God's will ; and I earnestly exhort you to hesitate no longer, but to arise and commence your preparation for the great work. I rejoice to observe your conscientious anxiety to ascertain your duty before you proceed. It is, indeed, of immense importance to be satisfied on this point ; for no minister can be happy, or very useful, who is in doubt respecting his call to preach the Gospel. I need say nothing of the minister who has either ignorantly or presumptuously entered the sacred office, and still finds himself without love to the Saviour. Such a minister, even admitting his deportment to be moral, is, nevertheless, a hinderance to the progress of religion ; while he, as it has been strongly said, " pursues the hardest road to hell which a man can travel."

But, my brother, you may offend God by demanding proofs of his will which he may not be pleased to give. If you have the evidences which I have mentioned, you may and ought to proceed. That you may thus decide, and that

God may make you a blessing to his church, and an instrument of turning many to righteousness, is my earnest prayer. You will find the ministry laborious, and attended by many trials of patience and of faith. But it has many precious consolations and pleasures now, and there is reserved a glorious crown in heaven for all the faithful servants of our Lord. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

If my voice could reach all the young men in the churches, I would now say to them, "My dear brethren, in what way will you serve the Saviour? How can you do most for his glory, and for perishing men? Why is it not your duty to preach the Gospel? Examine yourselves; apply the preceding observations to your own hearts, and alone, before God, with the cross of Christ, the world lying in wickedness, and the judgment-day before you; inquire, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'"

And to the *pastors and churches* I would say, You have in this matter an important duty to perform. You ought to seek out the young men who furnish evidence of ministerial gifts. You ought to converse with them, and to encourage them. Often, it may be feared, do pastors and churches neglect their duty on this point. Young men are left to struggle with their feelings, without one word of advice or encouragement. The more modest they are, and therefore the more deserving of sympathy, the more reluctant they are to disclose their feelings, lest they should be attributed to pride and presumption. A sense of unfitness, the greatness of the work, doubts concerning duty, all throng upon the mind, and often produce inconceivable distress, which one word of kind sympathy and advice from a pastor or Christian friend might remove. Many young men, it cannot be doubted, who ought to preach the Gos-

pel, are overcome by these anxieties, doubts, and fears, and relinquish the thought of the ministry. It is a mistake to suppose, that if it is a man's duty to preach, he will force his way through every obstacle. A man may neglect to preach as he may fail to perform any other duty ; and he is the more liable to neglect this duty, because the conscientious mind will probably consider it a less sin to refuse to preach, though it be a duty, than to preach when it is not. If his doubts preponderate in the smallest degree, the mind of a conscientious man will be very liable to abandon the design, and thus the very best ministers may be lost to the church.

But if a young man surmounts his doubts and discouragements, and makes his case known to his brethren, he is sometimes treated with cold suspicion; and obstacles are thrown in his way on purpose to test the strength of his zeal. And if, at last, the proper encouragement is given, so much time may have been wasted, that it is too late to enter upon the work with advantage.

There may be cases, too, in which a young man may not have thought of the ministry, who may, nevertheless, furnish evidence of piety, talents, and zeal, which would make him useful as a minister. It is undoubtedly the duty of pastors and Christians to converse with such a person, in a judicious manner ; to inquire respecting his feelings ; to ask him if it is not his duty to preach the Gospel ; to urge him to reflect and pray on the subject ; and thus give his mind a direction towards the object. No reason can be given why it is not as much our duty to use the proper means in this case, as it is to persuade a sinner to be reconciled to God. In both cases God may employ us as instruments to accomplish his will.

May God preserve us all from the guilt of neglecting our own duty, and of hindering others. May he send forth

many laborers into his harvest, and may his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, my brother, and with all who love him in sincerity.

Your affectionate

BROTHER.

NOTE.—A premium, offered by a friend, was awarded to the author of this Tract.

HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL.

How beauteous are their feet

Who stand on Zion's hill!

Who bring salvation on their tongues,

And words of peace reveal.

How charming is their voice!

How sweet the tidings are!

"Zion, behold thy Saviour King;

He reigns and triumphs here."

How happy are our ears,

That hear this joyful sound,

Which kings and prophets waited for,

And sought, but never found!

How blessed are our eyes,

That see this heavenly light;

Prophets and kings desired it long,

But died without the sight!

The watchmen join their voice,

And tuneful notes employ;

Jerusalem breaks forth in songs,

And deserts learn the joy.

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er, and so, by degrees, he advanced in knowledge. During six years, he omitted none of the hours usually appropriated to manual labor, and he retired to rest regularly at ten o'clock. Yet at the age of thirty-one he had actually *taught* seventeen languages.

FROM DR. SCUDDER'S APPEAL.

HAVING directed your attention to the wants of millions in our own country, permit me to entreat you to look over into this eastern world, and see six hundred millions, to whom the beloved name JESUS is unknown. When I take a view of these vast regions of spiritual death, my heart sickens within me at the slow progress of Christianity. I have been here more than twelve years; but I regret to say that the number of missionaries, if at all, is but very little greater than when I came. The Christian world does not seem, to any great extent, awake to the momentous business of missions. "As the work is now carried on, there is but one missionary to nearly two millions of souls. In some instances a single missionary is quite alone, and two, five, ten, or fifteen hundred miles from any fellow-laborer. In some cases, again, a number of missionaries are together, and have but a few thousand souls around them. But more commonly you see one or two at a station, in the midst of ten, fifty, or a hundred millions of souls, with no other laborer to help forward the conversion of the surrounding multitudes. The mode of conducting missions at present, in most cases, is, in fact, like sending one soldier to storm a fort, five to conquer a province, a hundred to subjugate an empire." While such is the case, shall I hold my peace? No. This cannot be. If I forget you, ye perishing heathens, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not you above my chief joy. "O, when will the

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groans and dying agonies of a famishing world, which has long cried in vain for the bread of life, be heard, and the church of God roused to action?"

Will it be said that it is impossible to send laborers abroad while the wants of our country are so great? I believe you will not think so in the day of judgment. In view of that day, let me address you in the words of two individuals who laid down their lives among the heathen. "O Christians, fly to the work. Do it with your might. The motives to it are infinite. Now is the accepted time. The heathen are before you. Their present miseries and their impending ruin call upon you to hasten to them the word of life. Your Redeemer bids you go and pluck them as brands from the burnings. Neglect it a little longer, and, alas, it will be too late. You and they are summoned to judgment. How can you meet them there? They knew nothing of that tremendous day: but you did; and you knew that if they died unwashed in the blood of Christ, that day must seal their eternal perdition; and yet you did not concern yourselves to acquaint them with that Saviour. Now you behold them standing on the left hand of the Judge, with unutterable horrors depicted on their countenances. Now they know that while you and they were upon the earth, though they knew nothing of this awful day, you had it in strict charge from the Judge himself to make it known to them, that they as well as you might be prepared to meet it in peace. But you neglected the charge. And now nothing remains for them but the dreadful doom, 'Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' As they go in anguish and despair, they cast a parting look at you. O Christians, what will you then think of those little sacrifices, those momentary exertions, which you are now exhorted to make to rescue millions from the tremendous doom?"

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